

KEY DATES

RELEASE DATE
September 1, 2015

LETTERS OF INTENT DUE
November 2, 2015
5:00 PM EST

FULL PROPOSAL INVITATIONS
November 16, 2015

FULL PROPOSAL DEADLINE
January 15, 2016
5:00 PM EST

NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS
April, 2016

AWARD START DATE
July 1, 2016

Transition to Independence Award

2015

Request for Applications

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AWARD

Program Description

Millions of Americans are living, often for years, with serious illnesses that significantly affect their quality of life and independence. Multiple national initiatives have focused attention on the need for improved quality of life for patients and families living with serious illness. Reports from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have cited the lack of trained investigators and established research groups as a major impediment to the development of the needed knowledge base to improve the quality of life for persons with serious illness and their families. Continued cutbacks in federal funding for research and shrinking medical school budgets have combined to make the path to a successful research career increasingly difficult for junior investigators. Whereas the period of vulnerability for early stage investigators has traditionally been the years between training and the first NIH award (the target of the NPCRC Career Development Award program), data suggest that another vulnerable period for early stage investigators has emerged: Specifically, recent data demonstrate that only 23% of investigators who complete an NIH career development award go on to compete successfully for their first independent research award. Indeed, these data suggest that over 75% of career development awardees will face an NIH funding gap following their first research award. Whereas in the past, medical schools and mentors were able to provide bridge funding while promising applicants revised and resubmitted their research applications, shrinking budgets have made this bridge funding increasingly scarce – particularly in a new field such as palliative medicine.

To promote the development of successful independent researchers working to improve the care of patients with serious illness, the NPCRC is requesting applications for its **Transition to Independence Award (TIA)**.^{*} The aim of the TIA is to expand the cadre of palliative care researchers by extending research support to promising investigators completing a federal career development award whom have not yet achieved independence as measured by successful receipt of an NIH R01 award or equivalent. The TIA assures a continuum of support for turning promising junior investigators into independent researchers.

The NPCRC was established in July 2005 with a grant from the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation. The Center was developed in response to a shortage of palliative care funding structures; a shortage of palliative care investigators; and a need for an organizational home for palliative care research in the United States. The primary goal of the NPCRC is to improve care for patients with serious illness and the needs of their caregivers by promoting palliative care research and rapidly translating these research findings into clinical practice.

^{*} Funding for this award is provided by the Hearst Foundations



This request for applications (RFA) is limited to applications that support palliative care research for seriously ill patients and their families in three specific areas:

1. *Exploring the relationship of pain and other distressing symptoms to quality and quantity of life, independence, function, and disability and developing interventions directed at their treatment in patients with advanced and chronic illnesses;*
2. *Studying methods of improving communication between persons living with serious illness, their families and their health care providers;*
3. *Evaluating models and systems of care for patients living with advanced illness and their families.*

The TIAs will provide one year of bridge research funding to investigators to support their R01 applications. Awards are \$50,000 to \$100,000 per applicant plus 10% allowable indirect costs. Awards are not renewable.

Award Information

To be eligible for a **Transition to Independence Award** under the NPCRC Grants Program, applicants must meet the following requirements:

Eligibility

- *Applicants must hold a doctorate degree (M.D., Ph.D., or equivalent);*
- *Applicants must have a full-time faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical or nursing school, or other fiscally responsible organization within the United States by the time of the award start date;*
- *Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the United States;*
- *Applicants should be a MINIMUM of five but a MAXIMUM of ten years post-fellowship (physicians) or post-doctorate (others); Exceptions to this policy will be made on an individual basis and potential applicants who would like to request consideration should contact the NPCRC;*
- *Applicants must be within 2 years of completing an NIH career development award or equivalent and propose a clear plan as to how research under the TIA will support an application for an independent research award.*
- *Applicants must not have received an NIH R01 award or equivalent*

Funding priority will be given to qualified and promising mid-career investigators who wish to establish themselves in areas that reflect the NPCRC mission goals. Applicants uncertain about their eligibility are strongly advised to contact the NPCRC before preparing an application.

Grantee Requirements

Each recipient of a NPCRC grant, as a condition of accepting the award, will agree to the following:

- *To attend the NPCRC Annual Retreat and Research Symposium meeting during their grant period;*
- *To prepare a final report at the conclusion of the award period;*
- *To acknowledge NPCRC funding in presentations and publications.*

How to Apply

Online application forms and complete instructions for the NPCRC TIA are available on the Center's web site at www.npcrc.org. Applications must be submitted electronically via NPCRC's online system by the close of business (5:00PM EST) on the specified deadline date. If the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, applications will be accepted the following business day.

The NPCRC has a two-step application process:

- STEP 1:** Eligible candidates are required to complete online an application data sheet and then upload a letter of intent (LOI) along with their biosketch using the NIH 5-page format, no later than November 2, 2015, 5:00 PM EST. The LOI should not exceed 800 words and should briefly describe the applicant's previous experience, research plan, training plan, resources, and career potential.
- STEP 2:** *Full proposals are by invitation only.* If an applicant is selected for further consideration by NPCRC, then he/she will be asked to submit a full proposal online no later than January 15, 2016, 5:00 PM EST. Only applicants who are requested to submit full proposals will have access to the complete NPCRC online application system.



Full proposals must include all of the items and sections outlined below.

Proposal Preparation

1. **Research Plan** | *The research plan should follow the NIH font and format specifications (i.e., font size of 11 points or larger; single-spaced; no more than 15 characters per inch; no more than 6 lines per inch, and at least one-half inch margins for all pages), and should include a page number and the applicant's name on each page. The following sections must be included:*
 - a. *Specific Aims (no more than one page);*
 - b. *Investigator Qualifications (no more than one page);*
 - *Include the investigators commitment to a career in palliative care*
 - *Provide evidence of the applicant's potential to become an independent investigator*
 - c. *Research Strategy (no more than 5 pages);*
 - i. *Significance:*
 - *Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.*
 - *Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice.*
 - *Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.*
 - ii. *Innovation:*
 - *Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.*
 - *Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.*
 - *Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.*
 - iii. *Approach:*
 - *Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project, include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.*
 - *Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.*
 - *Describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work.*

Proposal Preparation
continued

d. *Future Directions (no more than one page)*

- *Describe how the award will contribute to the applicant's research career and how the work described in the proposal will support an R01 (or equivalent) application*

2. **Budget** | *Applicants should follow the online directions on how to submit the budget for their proposed project. Project expenses should be in accordance with the NPCRC budget guidelines and justified, if necessary.*

3. **Biosketch** | *The applicant's biosketch in the new NIH 5-page format.*

4. **Letters of Support** | *Include a minimum of 2 letters of support and no more than 4.*

No supplemental materials will be accepted after the deadline unless requested by staff for administrative purposes or when needed for the reviewers.

Peer Review
of Applications

The NPCRC Scientific Review Committee (SRC) will review the proposals. The SRC is composed of internationally prominent scientists with expertise in palliative care, patient-oriented research, health services research, communication, epidemiology, research design and biostatistics.

Award Criteria

Applications will be scored and reviewed based upon the Candidate's qualifications and career development plan; the research plan; mentor(s) and mentorship plan; and the institutional environment using the following review criteria:

1. **Candidate:**

- *Quality of the candidate's academic and clinical record;*
- *Potential to develop as an independent researcher in palliative care; and*
- *Commitment to a career in palliative care research.*

2. **Transition to Independence Plan:**

- *Likelihood that the independence transitional award will contribute substantially to the scientific development of the candidate;*
- *Consistency of the independence transitional plan with the candidate's career goals and prior research experience..*

3. **Research Plan:**

- *Scientific and technical merit of the research question, design and methodology;*
- *Relevance of the proposed research to the candidate's career objectives; and*
- *Appropriateness of the research plan to the stage of research development and as a vehicle for developing an independent research award.*

4. Environment and Institutional Commitment:

- Adequacy of research facilities and the availability of appropriate educational opportunities;
- Quality and relevance of the environment for scientific and professional development of the candidate;
- Applicant institution’s commitment to the scientific development of the candidate and assurances that the institution intends for the candidate to be an integral part of its research program; and
- Applicant institution’s commitment to an appropriate balance of research and clinical responsibilities including the commitment of 60 percent of the candidate’s effort to research and research related activities.

6. Budget:

- Justification of the requested budget in relation to the research aims.

Application scores, comments, and funding recommendations will be forwarded to the NPCRC Scientific Advisory Committee who will make the final decision regarding funding and allocation of resources.

Award Criteria
continued

Applications that are not funded may be revised and resubmitted in the next NPCRC funding cycle. However, only two resubmissions are allowed. Resubmitted applications will be reviewed in the same detail and will compete on an equal basis with all other new applications.

Resubmissions

NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE RESEARCH CENTER
 Department of Geriatrics & Palliative Medicine, Box 1070

 Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
 One Gustave L. Levy Place, New York, NY 10029
 PHONE: 212.241.7447 FAX: 212.426.5054
 EMAIL: npcrc@mssm.edu WEBSITE: <http://www.npcrc.org>

Contact